

SIEC Briefing Paper IWN Project – Washington State Patrol, Washington Department of Transportation and the United States Justice Department and Department of Homeland Security

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Description

The IWN (Integrated Wireless Network) Project is a collaborative approach for radio communications for federal law enforcement agencies that uses Washington state infrastructure being augmented by the United States Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security. This project is being beta tested in Washington State from the Canadian boarder in Blaine, WA going south on the I-5 corridor to Seattle. The federal government is contracting with the Washington State Patrol, the Washington Department of Transportation, and county governments for the use of their microwave assets in exchange for the federal government's purchasing additional equipment and upgrading current equipment.

Recommendations to the Committee

This is a briefing only, and no action is required by the SIEC.

Status

The beta test is still being conducted; there are discussions to expand the network from Seattle easterly.

Issues

Due to the nature of this enterprise, state and local governments were required to sign non-disclosure agreements. The actual net-gain of bandwidth is unknown by the SIEC or committee at this time.

Background

The United States Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security (formerly the Treasury Department) is in the process of coordinating their radio efforts nationally. The genesis of this effort was the need of a single system that would allow for the communication of any agent back to his office. In a joint effort the Justice Department and DHS contracted to have a survey performed of their nationwide assets and followed up with a nationwide plan that would permit interoperability between departments. It was determined that as the majority of assets owned by the departments were VHF that it made a great deal of business sense to create a single nationwide VHF radio network that would be standards based. In this process, the IWN project chose P-25 as the preferred standard to employ nationally.

Rather than building hundred of towers, the Justice Department and Homeland Security elected to form business relationships with state and local governments that would allow them to leverage each of their respective investments. The Justice Department and Homeland Security would pay state and local government to upgrade their systems, add bandwidth and allow the federal government to use a fraction of the bandwidth that was bought. This relationship became a "win-win" for both the federal government as well as local government.